

## **ARE WE GETTING THE AMOUNT OF GASOLINE WE ARE PAYING FOR?**

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The number of complaints about gas pump accuracy has doubled from last year, but Montana consumers will be happy to know that the State of Montana Weights and Measures Bureau is on the job. In 2007, Bureau inspectors tested nearly 14,000 gas pumps and found that only about two percent did not meet the tolerance requirements. Montanans are fortunate, considering the national average is about six percent “out of tolerance,” which means that 98% of devices here test within a narrow range plus or minus.



One explanation for this accuracy is that Montana's gas pumps are relatively new because of changes in the underground storage tank law during the late 1990's. Another reason is that Bureau inspectors test at least 85% of all gas pumps each year. Finally, the Bureau has an effective registered service provider program that allows us to track who is adjusting gas pumps, when, and why. Only Bureau inspectors or service providers registered with the Bureau may legally test, adjust, or repair gas pumps, and a wire seal coded to the registered service provider or to the Bureau must be placed on the device when the work is completed.

Additionally, both inspectors and registered service providers submit written reports to the office. Since gas prices have risen, the Bureau has noticed a trend where gas station owners are having their pumps serviced more often to ensure that they are not giving gas away. The required documentation, the placing of traceable wire seals, and the fact that Bureau inspectors may show up at any time to test or re-test gas pumps clearly deter people from tampering with the devices.

“The Bureau enforces a “LEVEL playing field,” meaning no advantage to either the buyer or seller, and we do much more than just test gas pumps,” says Bureau Chief Tim Lloyd. “We are responsible for licensing, inspecting, testing and certifying all commercial weighing and measuring devices used in Montana; we enforce laws and regulations pertaining to quantity control of prepackaged goods and quality control of petroleum products; and we maintain the State Metrology Laboratory which houses state mass and volume standards, calibrates the mass and volume standards used by our field inspectors, registered service providers; and the lab certifies devices and standards used internally by various industries and businesses.”